R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 013 551 FL 000 208

RUSSIAN FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS--THE NEW YORK STATE SYLLABUS. AN EVALUATION.

BY- ZILINSKY, PIETER

PUB DATE 29 OCT 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.64 16P.

DESCRIPTORS- *CURRICULUM EVALUATION, *RUSSIAN, *SECONDARY SCHOOLS, *STATE CURRICULUM GUIDES, *LANGUAGE LEARNING LEVELS, AUDIOLINGUAL METHODS, ARTICULATION (PROGRAM), COURSE CONTENT, CULTURAL EDUCATION, CURRICULUM DESIGN, LANGUAGE SKILLS, PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT, SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING, TEACHING TECHNIQUES, NEW YORK, NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AATSEEL,

A REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF THE N.Y. STATE SYLLABUS, "RUSSIAN FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS," REVEALS THAT IT PROVIDES GUIDELINES FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF RUSSIAN PROGRAMS IN THE STATE. IT DESCRIBES A 4- TO 6-YEAR SEQUENCE OF STUDY DIVIDED INTO LEVELS, WHICH, HOWEVER, DO NOT NECESSARILY CORRESPOND TO THE SCHOOL GRADES. EACH LEVEL DOES CONTAIN MORE TOPICS AND SUBDIVISIONS ON THE LANGUAGE SKILLS AND CULTURE THAN THE CORRESPONDING FRENCH SYLLABUS. WHILE THE RUSSIAN SYLLABUS GIVES MUCH VALUABLE HELP WITH TEACHING TECHNIQUES, IT REMAINS TOO VAGUE ABOUT DEFINING EVALUATION OF CONTENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AT EACH LEVEL AND ABOUT OBJECTIVES OF THE FOUR LANGUAGE SKILLS AT EACH LEVEL. THE GREATEST WEAKNESS LIES IN THE LACK OF SENSITIVITY TO THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF SPECIFICS THAT ARE FECULIAR TO RUSSIAN, THOUGH THE VERY FACT OF ITS APPEARANCE PLACES N.Y. STATE AMONG THE LEADERS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL RUSSIAN STUDY IN THE U.S. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT A MEETING OF THE N.Y.-N.J. CHAPTER OF AATSEEL, OCTOBER 29, 1966, PRINCETON, N.J. (GJ)

ED013551

The New York State Syllabus Russian for Secondary Schools

[An Evaluation]

A Paper presented to The American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages, New York-New Jersey Chapter

by

Pieter Zilinsky
Commack High School
Commack, New York

FL 000 208

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Princeton University

October 29, 1966

I. Overview

Much that is right, clear and useful is to be found in the New York State Syllabus Russian for Secondary Schools. The Model Lesson, Patterns for Drill, shapes of Evaluation, how to encourage conversation "controlled"; "Almost all conversation on the secondary level will, therefore, (limited by the vocabulary and structures at the participant's command), be controlled." and conversation "free"; "Genuinely free conversation is rarely developed on the secondary level without concomitant foreign travel and without further experience in bona fide language contacts and situations. Relatively free conversation, however,"etc.,(p.22), Criteria for Selection of Audio-Lingual Material; "Will it fit a specific stage of foreign language study? Will it fit a specific age and experience level? Has it practical, personal usefulness, both as to the information and the speech patterns developed?" and on through Types of Audio-Lingual Material: 1. Social Amenities; 2. Classroom Procedures; 3. Area Information: "the tangible reality of contemporary life"; 4. Civilization; with a summary statement "Textbooks, particularly those of grades 7, 8, 9, and 10, should be chosen with this type of material in mind." (pp.3-4) these valuable highpoints of information are provided in the Syllabus.

II. The Teacher's Purpose

A. The Syllabus should enable the teacher to discover what the total program (called a sequence) for four or six years of study is and to divide that total program into levels. A level is a year of study or learning in a four or six year sequence. (p.24) It does not correspond to a specific grade. Therefore, grades seven and eight study one level or level one for two years, but

II. A.

grade nine studies one level, level one for one year. However, grades seven and eight may not learn enough to master the requirements for level one or, they may go beyond those requirements. So may grade nine and the others. The levels depend on student achievement in the following way.

Level one has three topics suggested; school, family, environs, (all ours-feminine), and each of these topics is divided into nine, eight and seven subtopics respectively. Level one then has twenty-four units of study or less. One year of study. Identical numbers as in Level I French except for Part II no. 5-My Clothing in Russian has been substituted for Le lever et le coucher. Level two allows the teacher to "broaden the base of experience to include social activities and demand a higher level of language competency." (p.26). The student attacks two topics; vacation in nine parts and social life in eleven parts. Units of study-twenty. French equivalent seventeen. With an available wider expanse and more people to meet it is clear why Russian students study twenty units and the smaller French seventeen. Level three includes"the realm of ideas as well as concrete situations in which identification, action and interaction are expressed." (p.27). The topics are personal life in eleven slices, in the country in seven and cultural life in ten. The total twenty-eight, plus seven suggestions for oral reports to be selected by individual students. The suggested oral reports provide four biographies and three story narratives. French offers two topics of twenty plus eight orals which is twenty eight. The Russians win again twenty-eight to twenty.

Level four examines experience which "rises from reading material and individual interests." Personal life in the Soviet Union, history and government, geography of the USSR and economic life and the Russian peoples broken into twenty-four units. French offers twenty-three. (p.29) Levels five and six "should be correlated closely with the reading material. The lives of authors, the content of literary masterpieces, the motives and actions of literary characters, the themes of reading selections and the significance of literature in deepening appreciations and clarifying the universality of experience." (p.30) Literature, the arts, music and science distribute themselves into twenty two units or eleven per year. French equivalent nine per year. The four year student or a student who completes the four year sequence has wrestled with ninety-six units excluding oral report suggestions, the six year student one hundred and eighteen. Half of my purpose is clear. If my classes listen, speak, read and write through so many units we will complete four or six levels. But what is the hard content of these levels?

II.

B. The Structures are defined in the French glossary as follows:

> Structural pattern. A combination of parts of speech used in an accepted order to convey a specific meaning. The audio-lingual approach favors the use of structural patterns as models to be imitated through pattern drills rather than the use of grammatical analysis and synthesis. (p.201)

And the structures are listed with the following introduction:

> Structures and verbs in addition to those listed for the grade, or sensible rearrangements of the sequential order among the grades, as required by "centers of interest," may be practical, since language skills for effective communication are to be developed through functional use and not according to the convenience of teaching the structures <u>per se</u>. (p.84)

That introduction continues:

> Any item which teachers deem needful for the promotion of communication skills in centers of interest might be included as an expression to be memorized outright or to be developed in whole or in part in pattern drills as a structural item, regardless of its place in the structure charts.

Let us look carefully at the scope of one level, the first. Nouns are provided in nominative, singular and plural; locative, singular; accusative, singular of animate nouns, plus plural of inanimate nouns; genitive, singular; instrumental, singular; and to each of the cases certain prepositions and specialties such as time expressions with the instrumental form, and the direct object answers to "in which direction?" for which the accusative is used. All of the questions which produce the varying case answers for who or what are given. Certain pronouns singular and plural in nominative form are required. Adjectives, singular and plural of hard and soft and mixed, and agreement and position in the nominative case are followed by adverbs frequently used as time expressions and then some conjunctions. Irregular verbs, a total of sixteen are listed and the verb section proper is curiously headed "Verb Structures". Conjugations first and second, declarative positive and negative, interrogative positive and negative, some imperfective and perfective aspect imperatives as needed, plus есть with y + noun/pronoun and common idioms with forms of "to go". The past, present and future of imperfective forms are required. If this is the work of a ninth grade class then additional noun information is suggested. Instrumental plurals, special uses of certain cases but the genitive plural is delayed. Additional verb structures included are ovать, reflexives, intransitives, double negatives and consonantal changes as needed. Twenty-three irregular verbs are also added. The perfective past and future are to be introduced.

Level four is a total noun review, numerals in cardinal and ordinal forms in full declension. Word building by means of roots completes noun study. All the forms of pronouns are listed and the formation of adjectives and adverbs from other form classes is suggested. The more complicated conjunction forms are to be mastered. Twenty-two irregular verbs are detailed bringing the four year total to one hundred ten. Verbal adverbs and all participial forms together with word building by means of prefixes and suffixes completes the list. Specific verbs appearing in level four are to correct and to be interested in which seems a bit late for such important items.

In practical terms to teach a four year sequence I should work through approximately ninety-six topics add all nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions and verb structures and my students should be able to control four levels of Russian. However, this mastery is arrived at not without some interesting concessions to an unnamed methodological demon. In"Sequence" on page 86 the following declaration appears.

> In order to facilitate the learning of language patterns cumulatively and in meaningful context, many structures are introduced only in part in each grade throughout the courses. The principles followed here have been fourfold, the combination of factors determining the choice being (1) their relative simplicity, (2) their relative importance in the spoken language, (3) their logical use with other structures to be learned within the grade, (4) their logical development from structures previously learned. For example, personal pronouns appear first functionally in grades 7 or 9 because of their relative importance in developing audio-lingual skills. They may be learned syntactically in grade 8 or at the end of grade 9 because of their relative complexity. (p.86) The French Syllabus happened to single out <u>interrogative</u> pronouns for a very sound reason.

Verb sequence was determined on a dual principle; namely the frequency of their use in the spoken language and the need for their use in other structures to be learned in the grade in situational context. The French Syllabus goes on to add that some allowance has been made to provide for the fact that French was being taught as a foreign language and that what applied to spoken French in France might not be best presented to speakers and more importantly thinkers of English. A verb frequency list is included for the French teacher; i.e. 174 items split into three categories. The Russian verb surely has complications of its own but perhaps it is best not to point to them but experience them instead.

III. Texts and Levels

A problem faced by each foreign language teacher is deciding when and where the basic text or texts or course of study produces one level of learning as indicated by the syllabus. Specifically where does a level begin or end in vocabulary; how much of what, what types of verb, how many intonation types; when, which parts of which structures or whole structures, conversation or oral composition? The revised model of the Regents examination will give a clear example of what the state can extract from the syllabus for at least the fourth level. Publishers on the other hand print and distribute as they please, levels notwithstanding.

IV. The Needs of Russian

A. It is at this point that as a teacher of Russian I must begin to doubt the simplistic fiction that any foreign language can be mastered if a general formula applicable to all languages is diligently carried out. By nurturing this doubt I discover that it is naif to attempt to teach four languages from the same guidebook. They did not come from the same place.

Fortunately omitted from the Syllabus for Russian is the Summary of the Six and Four-Year Sequences. In the Four-Year Sequence time is distributed as follows: grade 9- 70% audio-lingual, 20% reading, 10% writing; grade 10- 45% audio-lingual, 35% reading, 20% writing; grade 11- 20% audio-lingual, 60% reading, 20% writing; grade 12- 15% audio-lingual, 60% reading, 25% writing. (French Syllabus pp.168-172)

B. I assume this formula meets the needs of French but does it necessarily work for Russian. I am not persuaded that it does. What I am aware of as a teacher of Russian isthe fact that certain features of Russian cannot be described by observing the behavior of a non-Slavic language. Neither can they be presented in similar manners. The Syllabus must, must reflect this difference, this unique quality of a specific language. What sensitivity does the Syllabus show for this unique quality of a specific language? I examine the recommended order of exposure.

In the Russian sentence pattern it is most important to listen for the place of the strongest stress. It is important because Russian word order does not always correspond to English word order as in "He to me said," or where it is even more important in question forms. The only way the student will be able to reproduce correct intonation patterns consistently is if his teacher alerts him to this major fact of Russian speech. Where is this mentioned in the Syllabus? We are told however on page 15 that

> One of the principal objectives of foreign language study is to speak with good pronunciation and intonation. Along with intonation, other important elements include such suprasegmental features as rhythm, stress, and juncture. The development of both pronunciation and intonation, therefore, is an essential part of any foreign language course. Because the basic element of speech is sound, the correct formation of sounds and sound sequences will result in better achievement in all four skills.
>
> Both good pronunciation and intonation are dependent upon good listening habits. Since pupils can reproduce no more than they hear, the habit of purposeful listening should be developed and sustained.

B. 2. Speaking

It is reasonable to assume that if a student hears a sound he has not had to produce before, he does not know how to form it and he will substitute the closest sound he can form. On page 17 two contrasts are given Л — Лб, пбЛ (containing бl which is a non-English sound) is contrasted with пблЛь, then ect - ecть. There is no list, no samples of the other voiced-voiceless pairs. It is also very easy to induce the rule which governs the pronunciation of обед and Koроška. The lengthening and shortening of vowels is kept silent, no examples.

Liaison and Linking suffer the same fate, no examples.
С Ива́ном, а к Ю́рию

It is true that on page 18 consonant clusters, after certain consonants or homonomical spelling рот, род(homophones) and contrasts are given, мол,моль, мат, мать, рад,ряд, нос,нес(sic). But at the top of this page is a very valuable observation and command.

> Intonation patterns should be learned on the secondary level primarily through functional use. The general overall rule of rise at the end of phrases and of rise and fast fall at the end of sentences is a sufficient requirement for theory. Pupils should be given experiences, however, both in hearing and speaking, of many examples of different intonations, such as those used in expressions of amazement, surprise, doubt, curiosity, pity, fear, and joy. Teachers might point out the different intonation patterns of the language as pupils hear and repeat them.

Which is correct the theory or the experience?

IV. B. 3. Reading

Of the three types intensive, extensive and supplementary, only intensive will consume the greatest amount of classroom time and effort. The traps pointed out on page 48 refer to a phoneme-morpheme relationship. This is valuable and the Syllabus says the work will involve teaching the nature and significant features of the major patterns of Russian spelling. But, reading as a skill requires the English-thinking student first to adjust his sensitivity to word order, (more fluid in Russian than in English) to tighten his grasp of word configuration inasmuch as Russian derivational and conjugational segments play a much more exact role than do the same segments in English, (if they exist), and finally to expand his awareness of the much wider divergence between conversation and exposition or

journalistic text in Russian as compared to English, where the former presents a high degree of ellipsis in speech and a heavy participle load in writing.

That these few items of information are necessary to the student and are known by the teacher is clearly demonstrated by the Model Lesson on page 105. If this information is known why not mention it.

Parenthetically, it may not be very important to reading or the appreciation of the Syllabus but I was unable to find the modern Russian alphabet in this Syllabus. It is unique to Russian why not see it.

A final piece of reading. Under Vocabulary Learning (based on the French which is carefully detailed for contextual learning, direct association, abundant practice, vocabulary and the skills, active vocabulary, passive vocabulary, reading vocabulary, multiple sense appeal, building vocabulary, using inference and association, contextual inference and then inference through cognates and partial cognates) under vocabulary learning the cognates section there is an attempt to accommodate a problem specific to Russian in the following manner:

> Since the Russian and English phonetic systems differ, cognates given aurally in Russian may not always be recognized until they are seen. However, since a large proportion of English words are derived from Latin either directly or through the Norman French, skill in inference through cognates and partial cognates should be developed from the beginning of language study. (p. 83)

Since writing may occupy no more than 25% of the fourth level and no more than 10% of the first level and since only on the third level directed composition, controlled writing and composition from aural comprehension and written material forms the basic writing exercises the Syllabus concentrates on some difficulties encountered in penmanship. No sample letter of a Soviet student is shown but such a model is easily available in any reliable text. Most of the students' writing is confined to imitation and recording of memorized material. Aside from dialog sequences, syntactically correct sentences in logical order are required. Note taking in Russian from reading, tapes or lectures may be recommended by the teacher.

C. In Listening, Speaking, Reading there is much valuable methodological material. The types of drill are superbly detailed and illustrated. What seems to be lacking is a sensitivity to those types of learning and teaching which are intrinsically germane to Russian and without which the teacher's task is made far more arduous, the student's proficiency hampered.

V. Culture

It would be unkind to neglect culture in this survey. There are twenty-eight pages on and of it introduced by

> If this section of the Syllabus gives certain background material for understanding the Russian people, it is not that this information is not available elsewhere or that it should be read in English by or to the pupils. It is rather that the presentation here is meant to integrate certain notions of Russia into a coherent whole. It is also meant to be a guide to teachers in the selection of some of the materials of instruction, particularly at the third and fourth levels of a four-year sequence beginning in grade 9. (p.52)

This section is directly oriented toward the Russian experience and disregards French, Spanish and German culture. Although the section includes The Land and the People, Ethnic Groups, The Family, Education, Religion (a full page), Government and Politics, Language, Proverbs and Maxims, History (which seems to end in 1920), Literature, Art, Music, Science, the Culture section could as easily have been outlined French style and given more information less specifically.

VI. Conclusion

1. That the Russian Syllabus exists is a step forward toward strengthening all Russian programs in secondary schools in New York State.

2. That the Syllabus does not sufficiently distinguish what constitutes a level in two ways a) content: how much should a student know and be able to demonstrate he knows; b) activity: what qualitative differences may be expected among the four forms, namely, listening, speaking, reading, writing at a given level, this lack of identification is a shortcoming to be remedied in the future.

3. That the Syllabus is an invaluable methodological aid to the classroom teacher is obvious.

4. That the Syllabus when it is completed will show a much higher degree of sensitivity to aspect of language learning and teaching peculiar to Russian.

5. That the appearance of a syllabus for Russian with its current scope only seven years after the serious study of Russian began in the high schools of New York State is a tribute to the concern and enterprise of the teachers of

Russian in the state of New York, especially Mr. Bushallow of Shaker High School, Newtonville and Professor John Iwanik, Union College.

6. That the active support of the State Education Department and the Chief of the Bureau of Foreign Languages Education, Mr. Paul M. Glaude has placed New York State among the leaders of Russian studies in the secondary schools of the United States.